DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 621 EC 308 492

AUTHOR	Straut, Diana; Kluth, Paula; Papandrea, Jean
TITLE	Inward Bound: Transformative Learning in an Evaluation of a Pre-Referral Intervention Program.
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seattle, WA, April 10-14, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Attitude Change; Change Strategies; *Data Collection; *Disabilities; Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inclusive Schools; Intervention; Models; Participatory Research; Program Evaluation; Referral; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Researchers

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses findings from an evaluation of the effectiveness of a pre-referral intervention program that was being implemented in seven school districts in the Southern Tier of New York. The initiative is known as 7 SHARE, which stands for 7 districts supporting and helping to affect regional education. The paper explores the methods used to improve the effectiveness of data gathering and program monitoring. It critically examines the methods that are currently used to collect and manage long-term data regarding perception, practice, and performance. Second, the paper explores the finding that practitioner attitudes about referral and labeling are beginning to change. In this discussion, the report looks at how teacher's and planner's involvement in the data cultivated student success, and considers the claim that through participation in the program evaluation, teachers have begun to deconstruct their long-held assumptions about ability and disability in students. Lastly, the paper briefly explores the dilemma that is faced by program evaluators when there is a mismatch between what program funders, implementers, and program evaluators find to be compelling data for continuing the program. Appendices contain additional information on how instructional support works and interview protocols. (Contains 35 references.) (CR)

ED 455 621

Inward bound:
Transformative Learning in an evaluation of a Pre-referral Intervention Program

Paper prepared

by

Diana Straut, Ph.D.
Syracuse University
155 Huntington Hall
Syracuse NY 13152
dmstraut@syr.edu

Paula Kluth, Ph.D.
Syracuse University
150 Huntington Hall
Syracuse NY 13152
pkluth@syr.edu

Jean Papandrea
Classroom Intervention Coordinator
SCT BOCES Instructional Support Center
459 Elmira Road
Elmira, NY
jpapandr@mail.sctboces.org

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Straut
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

for

American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. April 2001. Seattle, Washington. Division H: School Evaluation & Program Development.

EC 308492

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"...I feel that I'm a much better teacher because of the things that we've learned together by coming together every month. It's probably one of the main reasons this program has been so effective."

Instructional Support Teacher participant in evaluation focus group

Introduction and Rationale

The past decade has witnessed a number of changes in the defacto and dejure delivery of special education. In particular, there has been a move to eliminate schooling that is segregated by ability, and to bring students together into inclusive programs that serve the needs of a wide range of learners. One common and growing reform in inclusive schooling has been the implementation of programs designed to reduce the number of students who are inaccurately identified as needing special education services. Known by many different names--Teacher Assistance Teams, Classroom Intervention Models, Instructional Consultation Teams, and Mainstream Assistance Teams, for example--the programs all operate under the same basic premise (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990; Tucker, 1993; Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996; Safran & Safran, 1996). These programs are founded upon the assumption that when teachers are able to effectively differentiate instruction and intervene in academic or behavioral concerns at the "first sign of trouble," then they can "prevent or ameliorate a wide variety of learning or behavioral problems prior to formal special education identification" (Del'Homme, et.al. 1996).

Plenty of research and literature has accompanied the growth of these pre-referral intervention programs. Produced primarily in the 1980's and early 1990's, the research has consistently documented that in places where sound pre-referral intervention programs exist, a) referral rates for special education have decreased and b) in some cases, up to half or more of students undergoing pre-referral services have not required referral to special education (Graden, Casey, & Bonstrom, 1985; Pugach & Johnson, 1995). Few studies, however, have made the connection between the implementation of the pre-referral initiative and long-term school change and none of the research has looked at how the pre-referral program has facilitated changes in teacher attitude about student ability. The scarcity of data begs the question, what is really changing in how we define and deliver education?

The Scope of the Program Evaluation

During the 1998-1999 and the 1999-2000 academic year, an external evaluation team from Syracuse University working in conjunction with BOCES program planners set out to evaluate the effectiveness of a pre-referral intervention program that was being implemented 7 school districts in the Southern Tier of NYS[1]. The initiative is known as 7 SHARE, which stands for 7 (districts) **S**upporting and **H**elping to **A**ffect **R**egional **E**ducation. Where previous evaluations of similar pre-referral programs had examined the impact of the program on referral rates (Kovaleski, et.al, 1996) or the cost effectiveness of the program (CSEF, 1996) this evaluation set out to establish significant baseline data and allow for in-depth multifaceted evaluation of the program over time. In some ways, the initial intent of the evaluation was fairly traditional and outcome oriented; we sought to understand what was better, what was unchanged, and what still needed to change as the program worked toward meeting its goals (Patton, 1990). What we learned along the way was that by involving stakeholders in the evaluation process—regularly and systematically—the evaluation itself facilitated learning and change in ways we had never anticipated. In the process of 'doing' evaluation, teachers and program planners began to look inward to make new discoveries about long-held assumptions.

The purpose of this paper is three fold: First, we will share the methods used to improve the effectiveness of data gathering and program monitoring. We will critically examine the methods that we are currently using to collect and manage long-term data regarding **perception** (changes in teacher attitude toward pre-referral) **practice** (changes in the delivery and effectiveness of instruction) and **performance** (changes in student performance—individually and in the aggregate). Second, we will carefully explore the finding that practitioner attitudes about referral and labeling are beginning to change. In this discussion, we will look at how teacher's and planner's involvement in the data cultivating student success. We consider—and invite the reader to consider—the claim that through participation in the program evaluation, teachers have begun to deconstruct their long-held assumptions about ability and disability in students. Lastly, we briefly

[1] BOCES stands for Board of Cooperative Educational Services—a state-wide agency that coordinates and delivers a variety of shared services to school districts in given geographic regions across New York State.

explore the dilemma that is faced by program evaluators when there is a mismatch between what program funders and implementers, and the program evaluators, find to be compelling data for continuing the program.

The 7 SHARE Model

The 7 SHARE Initiative is designed to help teachers raise standards, and at the same time, meet the individual needs of a greater diversity of students. To accomplish this, 7 SHARE reverses our traditional thinking about intervention and prevention of academic failure, and about staff development. 7 SHARE replaces the former deficit model paradigm of special education, and the "expert" models practiced both by pre-referral teams and by centralized staff development models, with the concept of Instructional Support. Instead of sending struggling students to separate locations for services, and teachers out of their classrooms for training, the student support and teacher training come to the location where teaching and learning take place: the general education classroom.

Selection and Role of Instructional Support Teachers

The model requires Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) in each school district, in the ratio of 1/500 at the elementary level and 1/1000 at the secondary level, working in a collaborative problem-solving process with trained Classroom Intervention Model (CIM) Teams. The IST is a teacher selected by the district from within the school and who leaves the classroom teacher role to become an instructional supporter for the entire school. Among the criteria that influence the selection of ISTs are:

- Teacher Certification
- Strong Language Arts background
- Strong background in effective teaching
- Has been involved in on-going staff development
- Committed to 7 Share Task Force Vision of Prevention and Intervention
- Willing to commit to on-going training and a long-term position
- Skills and willingness to provide on-site staff development
- Creative thinker, problem-solver
- Respect of colleagues
- Strong collaborative, organizational, leadership, and communication skills

In the 7SHARE model, extensively trained Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) work within the classroom and in teams of educators to create collaborative networks among the staff and students, following the principle that "instructional support is about giving your skills away" (Dr. Edward E. Gickling, 2000, IST staff development session). Specifically, ISTs conduct instructional assessments with individual students, work with teams in a student data-driven problem solving process, teach instructional strategies to students, model and co-teach strategies for teachers to use in class-wide applications, and provide in-class support to teachers as they become independent in applying these new practices.[2] ISTs meet in monthly network meetings to share ideas and successful methods from their work in individual schools, and take new strategies back to their schools for implementation.

Program Goals

The ultimate intended outcome of the 7 SHARE program is that "the instructional needs of more students will be met within the general education classroom through the collaborative planning and implementation of preventative interventions, so that the reliance on referral for special education services will be diminished."[3] While the program seeks to reduce the rate of referrals to the Committee on Special Education (CSE), it also aims to offer multiple benefits to participating schools. These benefits include:[4]

- enabling all students to achieve higher learning standards
- preventing the removal of students from the regular classrooms for "special education" in their primary school years (grades K-4)
- reintroducing students previously recommended for special education to the regular classroom
- enhanced opportunities for ongoing professional development among teachers

In spite of its reputation as a "special education" initiative, program planners at BOCES have maintained that the power of the program is in its impact on teacher practice in both general and special education.

---

[2] A more thorough description of program particulars can be found in Appendix A.

[3] "The Classroom Intervention Model" of the SCT BOCES. Program materials developed and delivered by the Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) and the School Improvement Program (SIP)

Theoretical Framework of the Program Evaluation

The perspective that has historically impelled pre-referral programs is quite simple: educators need to improve first line services for students considered to be at risk of failure.[5] It is a theoretical perspective that values collaboration, inclusive schooling, and data-driven decision making. In keeping with those values, three theoretical perspectives guided the evaluation design:

Critical theory

Thomas McLaughlin (1996) calls on academic institutions to recognize, interrogate, and engage the "theoretical strategies" used by practitioners. Certainly, theory is the domain of all people, not only of the academic elite. Building on this belief, we approached this study from a critical theory perspective. We examined how and when participants built and acted on constructions and ideas in the pre-referral process. For example, we explored teachers' perceived roles in the labeling of a student. We also examined where, when, and how the participants had power and agency in the pre-referral process. Further we valued the roles administrators, teachers, and students played in understanding and challenging historical and traditional paradigms in the educational discourse, classroom practices, and school structures related to pre-referral activities. Though the subjugated knowledge of teachers and students has often been ignored, it was central to this study. Uncovering cultural assumptions - assumptions about how and why students learn, assumptions about where learning differences "exist", and assumptions about being evaluators and "doing" evaluation - was a central tenet of our work.

Inclusive schooling

Inclusive schooling allies want schools to look and behave differently. Inclusive schooling, to many, is more than a set of practices. Some practitioners and scholars view it as a critical political movement designed to challenge inequities and encourage the meaningful participation of all learners in shared classrooms (Graves, Graves, & Braaten, 1996; Jorgensen, 1998; Renzuli, 1995; Sapon-Shevin, 1996; Udvari-Solner, 1996).

---

[4] The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, Central Services, District Organization and BOCES Unit CO-SER, attachment B Service Plan

[5] By "first line" we refer to instruction and support within the general education classroom.

Inclusive schooling values interdependence and independence, views all students as having gifts, and values a sense of community (Falvey, Givner and Kimm, 1995). While some view inclusive schooling as a philosophy related to disability, we believe it is an ideology that applies to all learners. Udvari-Solner (1997) offers the following broad definition:

> [inclusive schooling] propels a critique of contemporary school culture and thus, encourages practitioners to reinvent what can be and should be to realize more humane, just and democratic learning communities. Inequities in treatment and educational opportunity are brought to the forefront, thereby fostering attention to human rights, respect for difference and value of diversity. (p. 142)

While we can hardly claim that our evaluation set out to 'propel a critique of contemporary school culture,' we can confidently claim that our evaluation approach is driven by the theories of inclusive schooling that promote critique, democracy, and the exploration of what is possible in public education.

Utilization focused evaluation.

The design of the current evaluation involves a significant number of stakeholders in the collection and analysis of data. Were this simply a 'goals-focused' evaluation, we could analyze the data about referral rates and report that they were either up, down (indicating success) or unchanged (Patton, 1997). However, discussions with program stakeholders identified a number of goals other than simply reducing referral rates. A primary—and process-oriented—goal identified by stakeholders was that teachers would be involved in the data collection. Thus, an internal and external evaluation team worked collaboratively to ensure that the evaluation was sound in method and useful in outcome. Specific data collection methods that involved the stakeholders are described in the methods section that follows. Drawing from the work of Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Patton (1997), we attempted to design our evaluation so that it might be useful and to promote learning for participants.

Evaluation Design

The research team included an external evaluation team, comprised of faculty from Syracuse University, and an internal team which was facilitated by administrators from the area BOCES and an administrator from one of the participating school districts.

The external team has collected data through surveys (administered to all teachers who worked with an Instructional Support Teacher (IST) as part of the pre-referral program), interviews with principals, focus groups, and document analysis (e.g.: a review of curriculum and unsolicited parent letters).

The internal team managed the collection of **student demographic data**, which included the number of referrals to the IST; nature of the problem; interventions and results; attendance of students; the number of students classified by disability and the referral rates over the past 5 years.[6] In addition, the internal team has tracked **student performance data** from each of the participating schools. These performance data include statistics analyzing school wide scores on state mandated assessment tests, as well as the academic progress and/or grades of referred students.

Additionally, all instructional support teachers (ISTs) have tracked the nature of their activities each month by entering data directly into a computer program that facilitates data analysis. All participating ISTs are expected to report, each month: the number of student, staff, and parent contacts the classroom modeling of strategies, multidisciplinary meetings, and staff development. In the current round of evaluation (for the 1999-2000 academic year) these reports have been maintained on-line. This on-line data reporting system has made it possible to disaggregate the data in a variety of ways, and has established a long-term monitoring system.

The 7 SHARE evaluation has been conceived along three dimensions, which when combined, offer a broad look at the impact of the initiative, allowing for sound, data-driven decisions about future educational directions. The three dimensions of the evaluation—Perception, Practice, and Performance—and the questions that guided the research within each of these dimensions, are outlined below.

---

[6] In this paper, we utilize data from Sept. 1998 through the October 1999. The 1999-2000 academic year data has been recently analyzed, but was not ready at the time that the proposal was drafted for this paper. The majority of data used in this paper are drawn from focus groups and survey.

Perception data from classroom teachers, instructional support personnel, principals, and ISTs offers insight into awareness of the program, ideas about efficacy, and preferred strategies.

1. For teachers who have worked with the IST, what has been the impact on attitude toward student referral?

2. Do teachers believe that they are teaching more effectively as a result of working with an IST?

Practice data reveals what teachers and administrators are doing in relation to the program.

3. How has the 7 SHARE impacted teacher practice?

4. What are the structural conditions (e.g.: release time, staff development, cross-district sharing) that support or impede the success of the 7 SHARE?

Performance indicators suggest student academic progress and progress toward the stated goals of the program.

5. Does the 7 SHARE model appear to have a positive impact on all students (those "identified" and those not "identified")?

6. What patterns of student performance are noticeable within 7 SHARE cases and schools?

Methods and Data Sources

Data collection for this evaluation spanned several months, beginning in September 1998 and concluding in October 1999, excepting school breaks during the summer. All stakeholder groups involved in the 7 SHARE project were considered in the evaluation design. Those groups include classroom teachers, building principals, Instructional Support Teachers, families, and students. To date, there has been very limited data collected directly from families, with the exception of three parent interviews and a few unsolicited letters from satisfied parents. This represents a limitation of the data thus far, particularly in responding to Question #5 and #6 of the evaluation questions.

In addition to the formal data collected by SCT BOCES and the Syracuse University

evaluation team, data such as parent letters were collected in an ongoing, informal basis by several program participants. There has been extensive data collection, and as with any research, there are strengths and limitations of the data. These limitations are acknowledged in the Contextual Considerations section of this report.

Data Collection Procedures

The Syracuse University evaluation team and BOCES representatives compiled demographic and teacher-reported data beyond the 10-month academic school year. In order to develop the most complete picture of the practices, perceptions, and performance related to 7 SHARE, several different kinds of data were collected:

- Quantitative data on the perceptions of individuals involved in the initiative in each school building related to practices, perceptions, and performance;
- Quantifiable data from all Instructional Support Teachers, including but not limited to
  - # of students referred to the IST
  - # of students referred around IST by teachers/parents straight to CSE (bypassing or subverting the IST/7 SHARE process)
  - Nature of the problem—Anecdotal Report Form
  - Interventions and results—Anecdotal Report Form
  - Attendance, academic progress, and/or grades of students referred;
- Narrative data from individuals in each participating school building to describe perceptions of the program, any change that occurred, and barriers and levers in that change;
- Narrative data from teachers and parents documentation of program impact;
- Demographic and performance data, regarding student performance and program statistics. These data might suggest changes in students' performance and in referral rates over time among participating districts. It may also open the opportunity to explore possible differences between program and non-program districts.

The following methods and instruments were used:

Surveys

A comprehensive, 6 page, program-specific survey was designed and distributed to all teachers who were involved in the 7 SHARE program[7]. These teachers were identified by the IST at each 7 SHARE site. The survey asked for both open and close-ended responses in an effort to understand the changes in practices and perceptions of

teachers at program schools. Follow-up letters, reminding teachers to return the survey were sent in an effort to achieve the maximum response rate. Of the 147 surveys distributed, 64 were returned and useable—a response rate of 44% in the first year.

Focus groups.

In May 1999, evaluators conducted two focus groups with all IST instructors and a sample of teachers who worked with ISTs. These teachers were selected based on availability at the time following the IST focus group session. Group #1 included a sample of 7 classroom teachers. Group #2 included the Instructional Support Teachers, 7 SHARE program designers Jean Papandrea and Barbara Walkley, and trainer Dr. Edward E. Gickling[8].

Each group lasted approximately 90 minutes. Participants were instructed to "chime in" at any time and to speak freely about the prompts provided. Prompts were provided as suggestions for conversation, but the groups were asked to also bring up any related issues that they might find relevant to the discussion or the evaluation. Each focus group ended with the question, "Is there anything else that the evaluators should know about the program?" Both focus group sessions, with the permission of the participants, were tape recorded and transcribed.

Individual interviews.

Individual telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of seven building principals. The open-ended nature of the interviews served to strengthen the methods. An open-ended format allowed stories and personal accounts to flow naturally without the researcher influencing the interview with particular questions or ideas (Reinharz, 1992).

Teacher-reported data[9]

Throughout the school year, all Instructional Support Teachers maintained activity reports about their interventions. These reports included information about the nature of the presenting problem, the interventions that were tried, contact with support personnel (including families), feedback from students and classroom teachers, and individual student curriculum-based assessments (e.g. running records).

---

[7] It is important to note that many ISTs worked *informally* with some teachers, and these teachers did not receive surveys.
[8] Dr. Gickling, an expert in curriculum-based assessment, is an educational consultant from Virginia.
[9] The Syracuse University evaluation team is grateful to Jean Papandrea for her thorough oversight and reporting of the ISTs' data.

Review of documents and collection of artifacts

Program documents, including curriculum from IST training, stated objectives from the IST-Professional Development grant proposal, and unsolicited letters from teachers and parents were reviewed. We took information from these materials not only to determine themes and make connections to the research questions themselves, but also to develop prompts for engaging in conversation with the participants and to determine alignment between stated project goals and actual realized outcomes.

State education department and local school performance data[10]

Because the collection schedule of pre/post school demographic data was not aligned with the timeline of this evaluation, these data have not been considered within the findings of this report.[11] Performance and demographic data being collected and analyzed for future reports include:

- Total student count
- number of classified students by disability (include those placed outside the school building)
- Referrals to CSE: # of new referrals
- number of students referred but not classified
- Profile of pre-referral interventions
- LRE--Where classified students receive services: From regular education classroom to out of community
- Discipline referrals
- Suspensions and Expulsions
- Retentions: number of students retained
- Remedial Services: Total number of students broken out by reading and math numbers
- Drop-out numbers

Data Analysis Procedures

While the interviews certainly provided the richest and, perhaps the most valuable source of data, the remaining data collection methods assisted in the triangulation (Maxwell, 1996; Yin, 1994) of findings. Any piece of information is much more likely to be credible or believable if it is drawn from a variety of sources. Information from different data sources were compared and contrasted for purposes of identifying

[10] The Syracuse University evaluation team is grateful to Mr. David MacNamara for his careful and insightful management of the demographic data.

converging and diverging themes. For example, survey responses were compared with focus group data in an attempt to find discrepancies and disconfirming data. Issues of trustworthiness and reliability (Merriam, 1998) of data were also addressed through collaboration among the researchers.

As soon as the analysis phase of the evaluation began it was clear that multiple sources of data were yielding similar themes and categories (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Coding categories were formed throughout the data collection process and after careful review of all documents, survey data, and focus group transcripts. During the review process, notes were made on observations, ideas and patterns in the data. Pieces of information were sorted and reviewed one by one, and possible coding categories conceived. Data were then organized into patterns, themes or categories and given a "trial run". This sorting and rearranging process continued until distinct patterns emerged (Creswell, 1994; Maxwell, 1996).

The multi-method design was a primary strength of this evaluation. According to Reinharz (1992), "Multiple methods work to enhance understanding both by adding layers of information and by using one type of data to validate or refine another" (p. 201). By collecting information through multiple sources including interviews, surveys, focus groups and document and artifact analysis, we increased the trustworthiness of the data.

Contextual considerations and limitations

There are several important considerations that should be kept in mind while considering the findings of this evaluation. It should be noted that while there were certain limitations, we feel that the multiple sources of data did provide consistent themes.

Because this evaluation was designed and conducted in the closing stages of the period on which it would report, it was possible for the evaluation questions to comply with early outcomes and findings of the project. However, data collection was somewhat constricted by short timelines and the limitations of the academic school year calendar. Future data collection would be better focused and more comprehensive with long-range planning. For example, surveys could be administered more than once to capture

[11] Data forms and instrumentation can be found in Appendix B

changes in perception and practice, and more input could be sought from parents and students in participating schools.

As noted, the state and local school demographic data are confounded by an abbreviated data collection timeline (October 98-June 99). This made it difficult to consider, with accuracy, alongside other types of data. The evaluation had been structured so that SED data would complement other types of data being collected. It is important to note that the local data is contextual, and provides only one lens through which program success should be viewed. At this point it is considered baseline data. Finally, due largely to time constraints, a sample of convenience (Fowler, 1988) was used for principal interviews and the teacher focus group. The potential for bias is greatly increased with this type of sample.

Information from the different data sources were compared and contrasted for purposes of identifying converging and diverging themes. Through our multiple method design we have been able to use one type of data to validate, refine, or refute another source (Reinharz, 1992).

Findings

The data indicate that the program is making progress toward its stated goals. For example, survey, focus group, and interview data indicate that teacher attitudes about referring students out of the classroom are changing. We present here highlights of the findings of the evaluation. In the section that follows, we expand upon key points to illustrate our claim that through participation in the program evaluation, ISTs and program planners have begun to deconstruct their long-held assumptions about ability and disability in students.

The following were the major findings of this evaluation:

- Teacher attitudes about referring students out of the classroom are changing. Overall, teachers seem to be growing more confident in their abilities to teach a diverse classroom. 62 percent of teachers feel more qualified in teaching a heterogeneous classroom, and 64 percent of teachers have come to believe that regular classroom teachers can reach all children.

- 45 percent of teachers claimed to have reduced their referral rate since working with an IST.

- 75 percent of teachers indicated that they have changed their teaching practices since working with an IST. It appears as though much of this change is in the increased use of particular instructional strategies, such as "rainbow words"[12] and cooperative learning. It is possible that teachers are using more proactive strategies in the classroom. When asked in the survey to rate the frequency of use of certain instructional strategies, the only reactive strategy on the list (behavior plan) saw little increase in use.

- Teachers report a greater amount of communication with students who are experiencing difficulties, and those students' parents.

- Teachers and principals cited the availability of the IST on-site, when needed, as a major strength of the professional development model of 7 SHARE.

- Teachers and principals readily shared "success stories" of students that had benefited from the 7 SHARE program. The recognition of these benefits as affecting all learners was consistent.

In addition, the participants in the program report positive, unintended outcomes that are beyond the scope of this report. Those who participated in the evaluation process consistently expressed overwhelming confidence that the 7 SHARE initiative was improving teachers' pre-referral intervention skills and having a positive impact in the classrooms where ISTs worked. We found evidence that this model is promoting ideals and practices that do much more than reduce referrals. The model upholds contemporary beliefs about effective education for *all* students.

What we believe to be most powerful, however, is the finding that through their participation in the intervention model and the evaluation process, teachers began to question how they defined 'ability' or 'disability.' Teachers started to make connections between their own practice of instruction and student learning. Instructional support

[12] In the strategy "rainbow words", students use crayons and large pieces of paper to write a word several times, written each time in a new color outside the lines of the previous color, saying the letter name aloud as they write, then saying the whole word at the end each time. After doing this process, students turn the paper over and write the entire word once independently, then say it. Teachers tell students that this sends a "colorful, loud and powerful message to the brain".

teachers who participated in the evaluation and reflection process—coming together for monthly meetings, filling out monthly data reports, contributing in focus groups--began to deconstruct their own understanding of how their practice and their assumptions influenced how their students learned or progressed. Admittedly, some of the data collection was onerous, and not all ISTs enthusiastically embraced the 'paperwork,' but we believe that, overall, the teachers' participation in the process of gathering and reflecting upon the data has facilitated what Mezirow (1991) calls "Transformative Learning." The evaluation has supported staff development and professional growth. Documenting activities and coming together to talk about their work lead to reflection, encouraged innovation, and facilitated teacher discovery about the assumptions driving their practice.

Consider for example, the finding that almost half of all of the teachers responding to the survey prompt answered positively when asked whether the working with the IST had impacted their attitude toward student referral. Conversely, nearly half of the responding teachers felt that their attitude toward referral was not impacted by their collaboration with the IST. (See Table A).

TABLE – A: Attitudes Toward Student Referral

Q. 13(d) The IST has impacted my attitude toward student referral.

	Yes	No	No Response
Percent	**43.8**	**43.8**	**12.5**
Frequency	**28**	**28**	**8**

While the quantitative data is somewhat unrevealing and questionable, given limitations of the wording, qualitative data from focus groups and interviews indicate that teachers did have new opinions about student referral as a result of this program. Remarks such as "I look at my own teaching now before thinking of referral for a student," and "I'm more likely now to think about classroom practice in addition to student scores and numbers on tests when referring a student," reveal that teachers are thinking more carefully, if not differently, before making student referrals. In a focus group exchange among ISTs, there was clear consensus that the ISTs had observed changes in teacher attitude toward referral. Among their comments:

I think they've (classroom teachers) been more willing to take alternative measures to do something for the child before they jump right to the green form...there's more of a willingness to actually look [and think] ..."well maybe there's something I could do rather than putting all the blame on the kid".

I think the classroom teachers, at least in my district, have always wanted that. They've always wanted to not have to go through the green form...Now we have a process.

It seemed like before, the only way you could get help was to use the green form and now we have these groups where we discuss the child and what are the alternatives. We get valuable information.

Even if teachers were hesitant to report a change in attitude, they are clearly feeling more confident in their ability to meet the diverse needs of learners within the general education classroom. Over half of the teachers who responded to the survey indicated increased confidence in their ability to teach a heterogeneous group of students. (See Table B) Of those teachers responding to survey question 13, sixty two percent (62%) indicated that they did feel more qualified to teach students with a wide range of abilities, since becoming involved with an Instructional Support Teacher. Sixty four percent (64%) also indicated that the IST increased their confidence that a good teacher can effectively teach all students.

TABLE B: Teacher Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

Q. 13(b) I feel more qualified to teach students with a wide range of abilities since becoming more involved with the IST.

	Yes	No	No Response
Percent	**56.2**	**34.3**	**9.3**
Frequency	**36**	**22**	**6**

We interpret these statistics to be a strong indication that teachers are beginning to shift their perceptions of what is possible for all students in a general education classroom setting. While this doesn't speak directly to attitude toward referral, it does strongly suggest that teachers are beginning to see themselves as capable of delivering effective instruction for all students in the general education classroom.

While there may be sufficient data to suggest that teacher attitude toward referral and ability to teach all students in a general education classroom is undergoing positive change, the change in the actual referral rate is somewhat more difficult to interpret. Forty five percent (45%) of all teachers responding to the survey indicated that the IST helped them reduce the referrals in my class. (See Table C) Even though fewer than half of responding teachers (N=25) answered in this way, we feel this is a significant finding requiring careful analysis. Our initial 'read' of this finding was that even if only 25 teachers reduced referrals, then *potentially* 25-50 students were viewed and supported in different ways, before or instead of referral. While we're not able to quantify the number of students per teacher who were not referred, we can point to quantitative referral rate data (in the 1999-2000 report) that supports the claim that referral rates have decreased. We feel confident in suggesting at this point that the program is realizing the intended goal of reducing student referrals. We are anxious to see how this preliminary suggestion is borne out in the schools' numerical and demographic data over time.

TABLE C: Teacher Reported Reduction of Referrals

Q. 13(a) The IST helped me reduce the number of referrals in my class.

	Yes	No	No Response
Percent	**39.0**	**46.9**	**14.0**
Frequency	**25**	**30**	**9**

Data also indicate that teacher practice is changing. Seventy five percent (75%) of teachers responding to the prompt: "Please comment on whether you feel the 7 SHARE initiative has affected your teaching in general" indicated that *yes*, their teaching was impacted by the initiative. This of course begs the question of the ways in which teacher practice changed.

One finding that lends insight to the nature of the changes in teacher practice is drawn from survey questions that asked teachers to rate both the frequency and perceived effectiveness with which they use particular instructional methods. Increased use of all of the eight strategies listed (expert reader, fat and skinny questions, cooperative learning, curriculum-based assessment, pocket words, word search, rainbow words, and behavior

support plan) were reported by respondents. Participants in the teacher focus group offered comments to reinforce the survey findings. For example, one teacher shared "I started using them (rainbow words/pocket words) just for one or two kids and now I use them all the time for everybody." Another participant added, "My students have started asking me to use some of the strategies. They're learning more and they *like* it." All of the teachers in the focus group felt that all of their students benefited from the aforementioned strategies.

Another change in practice is related to teachers' collaboration with individuals and agencies beyond their classroom. Findings of this evaluation reveal that teachers are conferring with students and their families and their colleagues, more than they have in the past, about instructional practices and assessments. Follow-up information is needed to assess what, if any, correlation there is between the implementation of the 7 SHARE model and the increase in teacher/student/family interaction.

Significance

In the spirit of the AERA 2001 meeting theme of "What we know and how we know it," we have prepared a paper that considers how participation in an evaluation can support learning that is both transformative and change-oriented. ISTs, program planners, and teachers participating in this evaluation have reported changes in their own 'knowing' about special education as a system as well as in their delivery of services to students. When we hear quotes such as, "*Teachers have been more willing to take alternative measures to do something for the child before they jump right to the 'green form' (required for CSE referral). [They're able to look at different methods and be more willing to go through a different group even to find something that works before we automatically get the parent's signature and referral. It's not the "get them tested and see what's wrong' mentality. And there's more willingness to actually look. [They think] 'well maybe there's something I could do or something like that rather than putting all the blame on the kids'*" we find hope for students. We are excited by the prospect that through evaluation that supports new learning for teachers, what we 'know' about education--general and 'special'--and students at risk is being deeply challenged and ultimately changed. The dilemma for program evaluators, however, is in helping program funders and individuals charged with implementing system changes see the

significance of this transformative learning. Faced with a need for measurable, quantifiable program outcomes, program funders and those charged with implementation are not always so quick to embrace "feel good" findings such as a shift in thinking about ability and disability or a new focus for program development.

For us as program evaluators, we are faced with age-old questions—whose evaluation agenda comes to the fore? How do we create an evaluation that promotes continuous inquiry into what we think we know? How do we align the needs of program funders, implementers, and those who sponsor the evaluation with what we believe to be the ethical responsibilities of program evaluators? From our perspective, we have not done our job responsibly if we fail to pursue an emerging line of inquiry. As evaluators, we leave fingerprints all over the 'system' that we have evaluated. Given our impact, we must continually question our role. Are we "educational leaders" or number crunchers? When we see new knowledge emerging—as we have in the case of the ISTs who started re-thinking ability-- we feel compelled to take up that agenda. Thus we find ourselves as program evaluators looking inward as well, to understand more clearly our ethical obligations to those who are served by the programs we evaluate.

References

Center for Special Education Finance (CSEF). (1996). Pre-referral Intervention in Pennsylvania: Is it cost effective? Fall publication prepared by American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, CA.

Chalfant, J.C., & Pysh, M. V. (1989). Teacher assistance teams: Five descriptive studies on 96 teams. Remedial and Special Education, 10 (6), 49-58.

Creswell, J. (1994). Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dellegrotto, J. and Bloom, K. (2000). Instructional Support Practices and Principles. Training Manual for the Pennsylvania Secondary Instructional Support Model.

Del'Homme, M., Kasari, C., & Forness, S. (1996). Pre-referral Intervention and students at-risk for emotional or behavioral disorders. Education and Treatment of Children, 19, 272-285.

Falvey, M., Givner, C., & Kimm, C. (1995). What is an inclusive school? In R. Villa & J. Thousand (Eds.), Creating an inclusive school (pp. 1-12). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Fowler, F. (1988). Survey research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., & Bahr, M.W. (1990). Mainstream assistance teams: A scientific basis for the art of consultation. Exceptional Children, 57, 128-129

Tucker, J.A. (1993). Special Education: Past, Present, and Future. 14th National Institute on Legal Issues of Educating Individuals with Disabilities, Miami Beach, FL. Keynote address.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction. New York: Longman.

Graden,J.L., Casey, A., & Bonstrom, O. (1985). Implementing a pre-referral intervention system: Part II The data. Exceptional Children, 51, 377-384.

Graves, M., Graves, B., & Braaten, S. (1996). Scaffolding reading experiences for inclusive classes. Educational Leadership, 53, 14-16.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1989). Fourth Generation Evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Jorgensen, C. (1998). Restructuring high schools for all students: Taking inclusion to the next level. Baltimore: Brookes.

Kovaleski, J., Tucker, J., & Stevens, L. (1996). Bridging special and regular education: The Pennsylvania initiative. Educational Leadership, 53, 44-47.

Lipsky, D., & Gartner, A. (1996). Inclusion, school restructuring, and the remaking of American society. Harvard Educational Review, 66, 762-796.

Maxwell, J. (1996). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McLauglin, T. (1996). Street smarts and critical theory: Listening to the vernacular. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Merriam, S. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Franciso: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. SanFrancisco: Jossey Bass.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. 2nd Edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization-Focused Evaluation. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pugach, M. & Johnson, L. (1989). Pre-referral interventions: Progress, problems, and challenges. Exceptional Children, 56, 217-226.

Reinharz, S. (1992). Feminist methods in social research. New York: Oxford University Press.

Renzuli, J. (1995). Teachers as talent scouts. Educational Leadership, 52, 75-81.

Rosenfield, S.A., & Gravois, T.A. (1996). Instructional consultation teams. New York: Guilford.

Safran, S. & Safran, P. (1996). Intervention assistance programs and pre-referral teams: Directions for the twenty-first century. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 363-369.

Sapon-Shevin, M. (1996). Celebrating diversity, celebrating community: Curriculum that honors and builds on differences. In S. Stainback & W. Stainback (Eds.), Inclusion: A guide for educators (pp. 255-270). Baltimore: Paul H Brookes.

Sparks, D., & Hirsh, S. (1997). A new vision for staff development. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Udvari-Solner, A. (1996). Examining teacher thinking: Constructing a process to design curricular adaptations. Remedial and Special Education, 17, 245-254.

Udvari-Solner, A. (1997). Inclusive education. In C. A. Grant & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), Dictionary of multicultural education (pp. 141-144). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

Wang, M., Reynolds, M., & Walberg, H. (1995). Serving students at the margins. Educational Leadership, 52, 12-17.

Wasley, P., Hampel, R., & Clark, R. (1997). The puzzle of whole-school change. Phi Delta Kappan, 78, 690-697.

Welch, M. (1989). A cultural perspective and the second wave of reform. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 22, 537-40.

Yin, R. (1994). Case study research: Design and methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

APPENDIX A

How Instructional Support Works

Instructional support works in two arenas simultaneously:

1. Individual student struggles, identified by teachers, parents, CIM Teams, and/or students themselves, and
2. Systems struggles identified by teams engaged in analyzing student achievement data in specific grades, content areas or school-wide.

1. When a student is struggling academically, socially, or behaviorally, and the teacher's attempts at preventing the student's failure have not been successful, the teacher makes a request for assistance either to the Instructional Support Teacher (IST) or to the Classroom Intervention Model Team (CIM Team). The student and/or his/her parent may also make a request. The IST or a member of the team gathers more information; the IST conducts a Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA), and begins to focus in on trying strategies (trial teaching) that will turn the struggle into success. Those strategies that work are modeled for the student, the teacher, and the parent. The IST teaches these strategies within the classroom, in a guided practice delivery, supporting successful implementation by the teacher, the student, and the parent. The expectation is that the learners (child and adult) become strategic: not that the IST will be used as a related service.

The Instructional Support process for individual students flows as follows:

- A teacher raises a concern about a student.
- The IST/CIM Team member immediately meets with the teacher, gathering information to clarify the problem.
- The IST conducts an instructional assessment to learn, in the context of the curriculum, what the student knows and can do.
- The IST/CIM Team member tries and evaluates instructional strategies. This step usually happens within the instructional assessment.
- The IST/CIM Team member models strategies for the student, (this step also happens within the instructional assessment and strategy session) and for the teacher.
- The IST/Team member assists the teacher in class-wide applications of the strategies through co-planning and co-teaching.
- The IST/Team member provides follow-up, support, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention(s).

2. In the team approach to problem-solving systems issues, ISTs work with grade-level teams, content area teams, CIM teams, or building-based decision-making teams. In middle and high schools, this approach is far more appropriate and effective than intervening with individual students, since the issues related to student failure are systemic in nature (e.g. homework, study & organizational skills, quality of primary instruction). Together, the IST and team examine student data to look for trends and patterns that inform their decisions about the nature of problem, and develop interventions that will be implemented across multiple grades and settings in order to increase the frequency and consistency of implementation of effective practices. Teams

should examine student data on both macro and micro levels (Dellegrotto & Bloom, 2000). Micro data is available from the instructional process--teaching, learning, and curriculum, and is examined both for individual students and for groups of students. Examples include:

1. Reading skills
2. Math skills
3. Time on task.
4. Task comprehension.
5. Task completion.
6. Pass and failure rate on assessments.
7. Task retention.
8. Factual recall.
9. Test-taking skills.
10. Analysis, synthesis, application skills.
11. Strategies implemented to help students.
12. Number of students who receive A's, B's, C's, D's.
13. Number of students failing subjects each marking period.
14. Attendance Records.
15. Discipline Reports.

Macro data, information available on a "whole school" basis, is useful in evaluating the effectiveness of school programming, and informs decisions about improving the system.

Examples include:

1. Number and percentage of students who attend school.
2. Number of behavioral referrals to the principal.
3. Number of students who graduate and types of diplomas awarded.
4. Number of students who are college-bound.
5. Number of students bound for post-secondary training.
6. Number of students who successfully enter the work force.
7. Number and percentage of students who drop out of school and do not return.

The charge for teams is to engage in a data analysis process as follows:

1. Analyze student data (both individual student data and classwide or grade-level data):
    a. strengths
    b. causes of success
    c. areas of concern, trends or patterns
2. Select a priority concern or pattern
3. Determine the root cause
4. Identify strategies that address the root cause
5. Select strategies for trial teaching
6. Design an implementation plan
7. Communicate, implement and evaluate the plan.

APPENDIX B: INSTRUMENTATION

Please note: we have not included the survey to reduce the size of this document. Copies of the survey are available upon request from one of the authors of this paper.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

The following prompts were used to guide discussion in the focus groups:

- How has the IST impacted teacher practice?
- How has the availability of an IST impacted teacher practice?
- What has been the impact on teachers' (those who participate) attitudes toward student referral?
- How is the Classroom Instructional Model/ 7 SHARES spreading to other schools?
- How do people in your building find out about you/ the services/ the model?
- Tell me a story about a time when you felt your work (as an IST or with an IST) was successful.
- Tell me a story about a time when you questioned the effectiveness of your work or the model.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL--QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

- What has been your role in supporting the 7 SHARE initiative? Give examples of things you have done to support teachers or the ISTs.
- What changes in teacher practice have you observed—changes that you attribute to the 7 share initiative?
- Do you have any evidence of this initiative's impact on teacher practice?
- Do you have any evidence of this initiative's impact on teacher attitude toward referral?
- Tell me about a time when you felt that the model or the work of an IST was successful.
- Tell me about a time when you questioned the effectiveness of the (7SHARE) model.